

# MISSION CHAMPIONS

**Mildred B. Poole was the first chief administrator and principal of the Fort Bragg School System, from 1948 to 1953. In that role, she coordinated the integration of Fort Bragg Schools in 1951, years ahead of Brown v. Board of Education. The Brown decision outlawed segregation in all public schools.**

A few years after President Harry Truman ordered the integration of the armed forces in 1948, Principal Poole was approached by an African American Army lieutenant who asked her why his daughter could not attend Fort Bragg Schools. During that time, minority children were sent to segregated Cumberland County Schools off post. "I had no real answer, but to tell him, 'It's because of the color of her skin,'" recalled Poole in an article published in the *Fayetteville Observer* in 1992.

Mildred Poole is also responsible for the 1951-1952 integrated school budget approval that established the Fort Bragg school system independent of Cumberland County Schools, allowing it to operate with federal funds. Given the racial climate of the South, the decision to integrate Fort Bragg Schools did not go unopposed. Unfortunately, Mrs. Poole was eventually pushed out of her Fort Bragg school job in 1956, but

not before she had successfully integrated the schools and hired its first African American teacher. Years later, Col. F.J. Donoghue, who was the post dependent school officer at the time, credited Poole's management style for the lack of complaints received.

Mrs. Poole would go on to teach in North Carolina public schools for the rest of her career. She always maintained that integration was the right choice to make, "Integration was what, in the sight of God, we should have done. I've never, ever had the feeling what we did at Fort Bragg was wrong." Poole died in 1992.

In addition to school integration, some of Poole's accomplishments toward the advancement of quality education for all school-age children included milestones such as:

- Hiring the first African American teacher in 1951.
- Procuring funds for the construction of Bowley School (completed 1953 and was the first permanent modern school facility on Fort Bragg).
- Establishing a large nursery and kindergarten with funds supplied by parents.
- Coordinating the building of several school playgrounds.

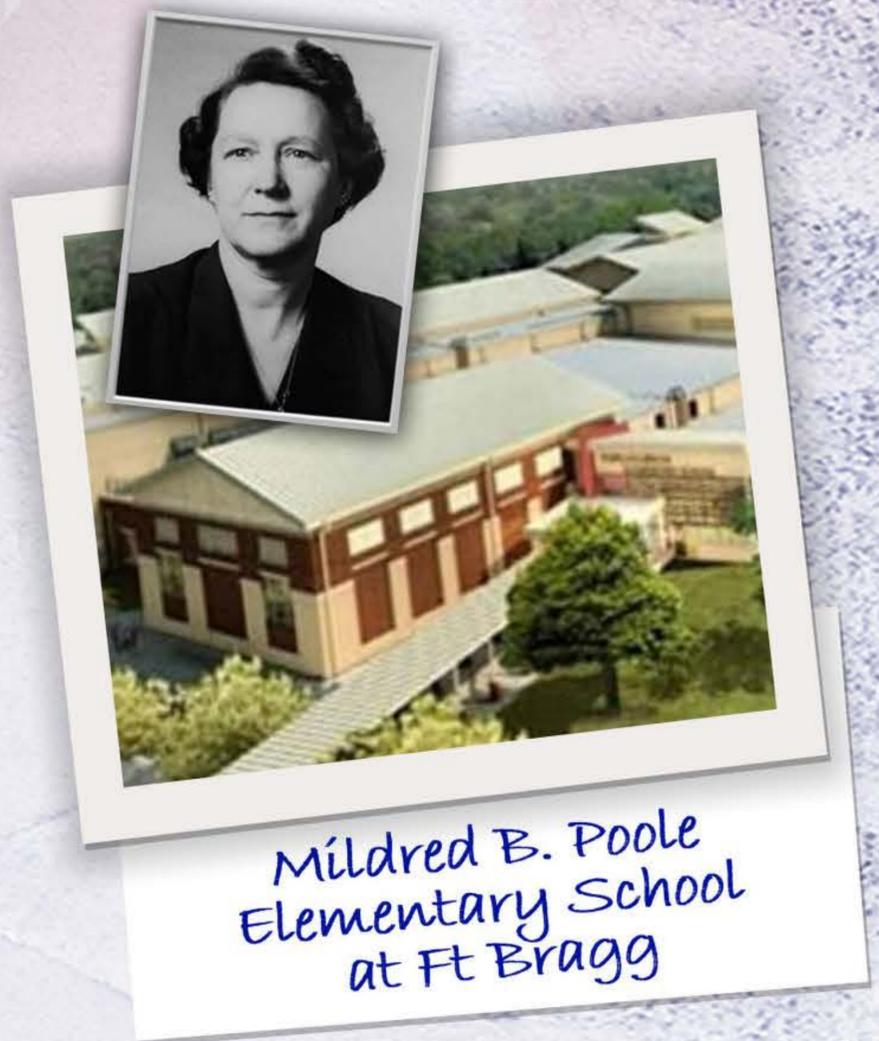
## Mildred Barrington Poole



Mildred Barrington in her Senior year, from the 1921 Pine Needles (North Carolina College for Women, now UNC) yearbook.



A REASSURING HUG FROM TEACHER  
Photo from June 6, 1954, Greensboro Daily News article.



Mildred B. Poole Elementary School at Ft Bragg

*In 2016, Mrs. Poole was honored posthumously by DoDEA Americas with an announcement of the opening of a new school at Fort Bragg. The Mildred B. Poole Elementary School opened in 2018, the first school on the base named after someone who was not a soldier.*

*Mildred Barrington Poole was a 1921 graduate of the North Carolina College for Women, now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*

Sources:  
Spartan Stories – University of North Carolina at Greensboro; U.S. Army-Fort Bragg; and DoDEA.  
<http://uncghistory.blogspot.com/2019/02/mildred-barrington-poole-class-of-1921.html>